

To Whom It May Concern,

I am contacting you in regards to HB 5295 and wish to express my gravest dismay and alarm that this bill is being considered. As a proud resident of the great State of Connecticut, rabbit owner and animal advocate, I encourage you to **vote NO on HB 5295**.

Connecticut is home to a very strong, passionate and widespread community of animal advocates. We are proud to be part of this wonderful state and wish for it to continue being an example to the rest of the country in its tradition of protecting animals and matching its laws with current societal beliefs. **Make no mistake, if this bill is passed Connecticut will regress.**

Rabbits are the third most popular household pet in the United States after dogs and cats. Just because you don't see them being taken on walks outside or hear them because they are quiet animals, please know that numerous Connecticut homes happily and lovingly include rabbits. They are very affectionate, playful, and social animals that should NOT be considered for farming purposes. Rabbits deserve so much better than this horrific proposal. And the residents of Connecticut deserve so much better than this because we are better than this.

Connecticut along with the rest of the country has time and time again demonstrated that rabbits deserve better as the nation's #3 pet by implementing several initiatives. Due to intense public pressure, both Petco and PetSmart stopped selling rabbits as pets and instead only display rescue rabbits for adoption – the same treatment they give to dogs and cats. Whole Foods and other specialty stores stopped selling rabbit meat after concluding there was no market for sales. The multi-billion-dollar cosmetic industry has been actively moving away from using rabbits in their cruel testing programs due to consumer pressure – and regulations to ban animal testing are currently being considered at the federal level.

With this very clear movement to treat rabbits in the same manner as we treat dogs and cats underway, it is simply illogical and reprehensible for Connecticut to consider passing this bill. We must say NO to HB 5295 and recognize rabbits for what they are: loving pets worthy of our protection and advocacy.

Additionally, this proposal will bring factory-like farming of rabbits to our state. **Factory farming does NOT align with the values of Connecticut residents.** In a poll, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) reported "[94% of Americans agree that animals raised for food deserve to live free from abuse and cruelty](#)". Yet the majority of the nearly 10 billion land-based animals farmed for food each year in the U.S. live in unacceptable conditions that do not align with consumers' stated values. Animals are not the only ones suffering because of these unnatural, inhumane conditions. Consumers, rural communities, farmers, workers and the environment are being hurt by the intensive farming systems employed on factory farms." How does factory farming make sense for the nation's #3 pet? And how does it make sense to bring this to Connecticut? It does not, which is why we must vote NO on HB 5295.

Lastly, this proposal is extremely irresponsible and reckless given the pandemic that rabbits, both wild and domestic are experiencing. **Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus 2 (RHDV2) is currently spreading across the country** and has recently made its way to New York. Nicknamed "Bunny Ebola" because it is so deadly, highly contagious and hardy, this proposal would increase the risk of bringing this disease to our state and endanger the wild and domestic rabbits already living here. Connecticut is home to two types of wild rabbits: the New England cottontail and the Eastern cottontail. These animals are important to the state's ecosystem and increasing the risk of bringing "Bunny Ebola" here is dangerous and one that the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) should be highly concerned about especially given their [conservation efforts for the New England cottontail](#).

As your fellow Connecticut resident and neighbor, I sincerely appreciate your time and consideration. **Please keep Connecticut on a path moving forward instead of backwards and vote NO on HB 5295.**

Sincerely,

Keeley Mangeno
Best Friends Animal Society (bestfriends.org)
Phone: 860-2719041
Address: 78 Olive St., Apt. 326, New Haven, CT 06511